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MEETING HOUSES OR CHURCHES ✠ A CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BEAUTY IN OUR HOUSES OF WORSHIP: BEING EXTRACTS FROM A PAPER FIRST READ BEFORE THE S. PAUL'S SOCIETY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY ✠ BY RALPH ADAMS CRAM



THE title I have chosen for the paper which I am to read before you this evening may possibly seem a curious one for what is, avowedly, nothing more than a plea for beauty in our churches, or at the most an argument for the vital union of beauty and worship; but I think it is justifiable, and, in a measure, accurate, for I firmly believe that in the attempt to substitute meeting houses for churches, which was such a pious enterprise in the earnest but oblique minds of our Puritan ancestors, lay the cause, not only of the very doleful structures reared by these same worthy Puritans under the mistaken idea that so they were doing God service, but as well, of the very reprehensible religious edifices that we are now building, and of the peculiar mental condition which prevents us from realizing, as we should, their unfortunate nature.

In other words, the temporarily successful attempt to supersede churches by meeting houses resulted in utterly banishing beauty from our houses of worship, while this lamentable condition of things was, in its turn, one of the most potent factors in creating the existing state of artistic impotence and blindness.

Of course the dominant mental temper of the seventeenth century, with its terrible earnestness, its bitter bigotry, its lack of sweetness and light, taking its tone, as it did, from the new dominion of the less favored classes, with all their mistaken views of the Holy Scriptures, their literalness, their materialism,—was at the root of it all, and the fault must be charged to this rather than to the unbeautiful structures which were the result of an unbeautiful theory of religion; but the influence of art, whether good or bad, is enormous and not to be disregarded, and, therefore, as the spread, and glory and dominion of Catholic Christianity may be traced in a secondary measure to its sublime artistic manifestations, so may we be justified in attributing something of the artistic dark ages of the eighteenth century, and of the first half of the nineteenth to the ugly and barren work which expressed in material form the religion for a time called “reformed.”

A great many other causes are assigned for the humiliating fact that the churches we build now are unworthy, the most magnificent of them, to stand for a moment with the humblest mediaeval parish church, for the fact is humiliating, and when it is not bravely and

blindly denied point blank by those worthy men for whom there can be neither retrogression nor immobility in life, it must at least be explained. Yet no such explanation is satisfactory; it is doubtful, even, if the apologists themselves believe their excuses. It is no explanation of the hideousness of life and the puerile mimicry of art which exists today, to say that we, in this country, have no time for art and for the other amenities of life. On the contrary, we all know that art is not a scientific or economic product. We know that it is a mental temper, a spiritual condition, and we know that it is just as much an adjunct of wholesome life as is bodily health. We have time enough for art, much more than many peoples have possessed in the past. Beauty takes no time. A good church can be built as quickly as a bad church. It takes no longer to paint a good than a poor picture—much less in fact. We spend in a year more money on what we are pleased to call art education, more labor in our art schools and ateliers and offices, than was spent in Italy during the whole fifteenth century,—and yet, when the result is nil—at the best—we cry pitifully, “What would you have, we are so young yet?” That is the excuse of a coward. When the Greeks set foot on the shores of the land they called Magna Graecia, were they compelled to wait a century or two before they could build temples as beautiful as those they had left? By no means; the lines of the temple of Poseidon at Paestum are as subtle and as sensitive as those of the Parthenon. When Roger the Norman conquered Sicily and founded a new civilization, did a period of artistic depravity ensue? On the contrary, the art of the new Norman kingdom became in a short time infinitely more beautiful than any then existing in the land from which the conquerors had come. When the Spaniards won Mexico and, Mr. Prescott to the contrary notwithstanding, established there a civilization in many ways more gentle, more admirable, than that of the Aztecs, did they build hideous boxes for churches? The superb cathedrals, the finest architectural monuments in the New World, the rough missions of California, beautiful even in their rudeness, with a beauty we can no longer achieve,—give the answer. Finally, when our own Puritan ancestors came here, did even they build such very vulgar and terrible structures as, for example, certain of our Boston churches and meeting houses? I very much fear that the answer to these questions will show that our art is bad, not because we are so young, but because we are so old.

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The plea, then, of our excessive youth is neither excuse nor explanation; the true cause lies deeper, nearer the roots of life itself.

It is sometimes acknowledged by those who are seeking for the reason why this country, so brilliant in many ways, should be so barren artistically, that it looks as though we had lost the artistic spirit. This is simply stating the condition in another way. Of course

MEETING we have lost the artistic spirit, but why have we lost it, what has
HOUSES OR been the cause? This is a far more pertinent question, and is one
CHURCHES more worthy of consideration. Were the answer to this sought seriously, one or two things would, I think, become apparent. In the first place, we should find that all the art that exists in the world at the present day, all the art, that is, down to the sixteenth century, the art of Egypt, Assyria, India, Japan, the art of every country in Europe, whether created under pagan or Christian times, all this treasure of wondrous art owes its existence to one motive. one impulse,—the impulse of worship, the serving of God.

In the second place, we should find that all the Christian art that exists, whether it be architecture, sculpture, painting, music, craftsmanship, owes its life and its glory to one power, the Catholic Church, and we should find also that, although Protestantism has held dominion in Germany, England, Scandinavia and the United States for several hundred years, it has produced no vital art of any kind; such sporadic instances as have occurred possessing no connection whatever with the dominant form of theology. We should also find that the decadence of art has been almost unbroken since the period called the Reformation. I argue nothing from these facts, I wish only to call attention to them.

In speaking of art in this way, I do not mean that no art whatever has existed in the Christian world since the sixteenth century. That would be grotesque. I only mean that instinctive art, that universal impulse which glorified the humblest kitchen utensil in classical or mediaeval or renaissance times, has disappeared; the instinctive art work of the people is now bad; such art as there is, is the possession of a very few divinely inspired or specially trained men, and if anything good is to be done, application must be made to a "professional artist." Let me call your attention to the fact that for the first time since history began, this thing can be said, the first time in thousands of years. Is not this ominous? I think so, and I think also that it is significant.

Now, is it merely a coincidence that this condition should obtain most vigorously in the country which has seen the growth of the most unreligious, materialistic system of life that the century has produced? Is it merely a coincidence that, in that period in the past with which ours has the most in common—the decadence of Rome—we should find what comes nearest to being a collapse of art almost equal to our own?

For myself, I doubt if coincidences occur very frequently. I am disposed to think that there is a close connection between the religious troubles of the sixteenth century and the artistic troubles that followed. In other words, that the substitution of meeting houses for churches may perhaps lie somewhere near the source of our artistic decadence.

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But however this may be, you will not, I am sure, dispute the statement that the era of ugly religious architecture and barren religious art began with the period of the Reformation. The documents in the case prove this. The enthusiastic reformers in England showed their devotion to God by first burning, plundering and razing to the ground the monasteries and many of the churches, by dashing into ruin all the statues and carving, and the splendid painted glass, and by melting down all the gold and silver vessels, and appropriating all the jewels which had been consecrated to God, and then proceeded to turn the pitiful ruins of once holy and glorious fabrics into white-washed shells, or to build very terrible structures, square, empty and forbidding, full of the blind terror of fanatical ignorance and the pharisaic contentment of incorrigible bigotry. And so they have remained until a few years ago, when suddenly rose that most extraordinary cry, "Go to, let us have some high art." Then the bareness vanished, and that very inartistic man, the architect, plunged in a riot of aesthetic debauchery. The whole world was ransacked for motives and schemes, and now in this year of grace there is not a Christian style, or pagan either, that has not been dragged from its grave by this curious resurrection, and made a by-word and a reproach in the sight of men; and yet we have not a real, vital, spontaneous, genuine church in the whole fantastic pageant, not one that says, "I was built in the sweat of the brow of men who loved God, and who brought here of their best that they might do honor to Him with all the beauty and treasure that lay in their hands."

We build churches enough, too many; but how often do they rise, in their outward effect, above the impression of a religious club, or a monument to the wealth of a special parish. Money in plenty is lavished on them, and with a dim idea that, by such expenditure, a beautiful result will be obtained. But is it? All that glitters is not art. The church may be carved into rivalry with a Japanese ivory ball, it may be painted with all the colors of the paint box, all the patterns in Owen Jones' Grammar of Ornament. Its windows may blaze with intolerable light, it may have a spire taller than the pinnacles of Cologne, and yet it may not possess one breath of art, one line of beauty.

As a matter of fact it mostly does not. Take the ordinary Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist structure: can it do otherwise than make the judicious grieve? Its building committee has worn itself out trying to get something that would be "rich and elegant"; its architect has ransacked two hemispheres for inspiration: and the result?—a self-conscious, affected, bizarre monument to the impotence of the age. And here again, for the mental temper, for the spiritual condition which makes this tyranny of the ignorant architect complete, which makes possible a serene contentment in the minds of the public with, for example, certain grotesque monstrosities in Boston

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which I am grievously tempted to name, we are justified in looking to the meeting-house builders. Driven by the fancied teachings of a woefully misread and misunderstood Bible, and by the natural reaction from the dominant religious system, weakened and corrupted by centuries of unbroken power, they ruthlessly stamped out of their souls every vestige of the love of beauty and art, not only the love of the fine arts themselves, but of all beauty of thought, and feeling, and emotion: and as a result they gave to their children lives to which the artistic idea was utterly foreign, lives from which instinctive love of beauty and appreciation thereof had been banished forever.

Now, this is a very serious matter, for the absence of all worship of beauty, of artistic impulse from a people, means far more than that these people will suffer from the loss of one of the ornaments of civilization: it means that their whole mental temper will be changed, that the results will be seen in every domain of life, that the absence of a saving impulse will be felt in the counting-room and the stock exchange, as well as in the studio and the picture gallery; in the police courts and the reformatory institutions as well as in the churches; in the whole system of living of a nation, not alone in the productions of the painter and the architect. It means that our minds will become narrow, material, unbeautiful; our religion, if it continues, crude, hard, unlovely. It means that we shall flaunt and worship a barren and fictitious civilization from which all elements of real civilization have fled. So high I put art and the influence of beauty and the just love of beauty, and if you want my justification for stating these things in this fashion, I must refer you, not to the histories of the past two thousand years, for they are apt not to be historical, but to the history of that time.

If we can look on art and the love of beauty in this light, as one of the greatest engines of true civilization in the world, the fact that this age, so far as the United States is concerned, is essentially an age without art, must seem almost the most shocking and ominous fact that we have to confront, and it will also seem that, although the revision of the tariff, and the free coinage of silver, and the income tax, are matters of vital importance, there is another that, judged by the standard of actual necessity, becomes in a way the most important and imperative of all, and that is this: How can we change this from an art-less to an art-full age, how can we restore to the people the soul that is gone out of them?

To this question the ordinary reply would be, "By increasing the number and broadening the influence of our schools of art; by multiplying art lectures and strengthening art museums." At the risk of ridicule I am going to confess to a belief that, so far as changing the temper of the time is concerned, or the increasing of the love of art,

the worship of beauty, and the production of artistic and beautiful objects, the influence of the accepted agencies is either nothing or of a nature to be deplored. In almost every instance the essence of art and the secret of beauty is utterly ignored, and therefore we confront the phenomenon of the most elaborate system of art education ever evolved, existing simultaneously with the most crudely inartistic conditions that have ever been known. If we are to possess a civilization which is worth expressing itself artistically, we must do something besides establish art-lectureships, we must change the conditions of life, the temper of the people: and we must begin by substituting churches for meeting houses.

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For art and true religion are united by the bond of absolute life. Each strives for, each achieves the same end, the realization of the ideal, the idealization of the real. Art trying to express through the mystic and sensuous and spiritual symbolism of color, and form, and light and shade, and musical tone, emotions and impressions otherwise inexpressible; religion striving to voice the same things through the mediumship of art, to sway men's minds and exalt their spiritual consciousness by means of the subtle influence of solemn architecture, splendid color, majestic and sonorous music, stately, wonderful ritual. And each succeeds, or has succeeded in the past, and the reason for the present lamentable failure lies, very largely, I believe, in their separation, in the fact that art has been banished from the Church, the Church from art, until so long a time has passed that each has forgotten the former union. Now our churches here in America have become either bare, ugly meeting houses, destitute of symbolism either in ritual or ornamentation, or else vulgar and offensive exhibitions of tawdry wealth striving to purchase for itself the covering of art wherewith to hide its nakedness, failing utterly, only attaining a measure of popular astonishment and gaping admiration; unsatisfactory substitutes indeed, for the devotion, and reverence, and awe, which once raised with loving hands mighty temples acceptable to God. Not only this has happened, the direct result of the substitution of the meeting house for the house of God, but also the destruction of artistic and beautiful ritual, of seemly order.

And this question of ritual is as much a legitimate part of our consideration as the question of church architecture, perhaps in importance it should take precedence, for beauty of ritual can glorify a box of a church, while a cold and barren service can destroy in great degree the effect of any church, however good it may be as an architectural structure. I know of a square, hopelessly ugly little church in Boston, built many years ago in the meeting-house style of architecture and for meeting-house purposes, where the worship of God is conducted with a ritual so beautiful in every detail, so full of deep

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and spiritual feeling that one absolutely forgets the dingy environment; the art of ritual has done its work and has wrapped the worshipper from out himself.

On the other hand I know a second church, in the same city, which is, within, a gorgeous mass of color and gold and carving and blazing windows, yet where the bald, cheerless service, possessing nothing of beauty beyond the solemn words of the Prayer Book, leaves one spiritually cold, undoes the work of the architectural surroundings.

For the question of ritual is not a question of fashion or custom or expediency, or even wholly of dogma. It is a matter of common sense. Ritual is, in one aspect, simply a manifestation of art, it is the using of the arts of sound and color and form and rhythm and harmony, organized by order and law, to influence the souls of men through their senses, by means of their capacity of artistic appreciation. It is as much a branch of art as is architecture, and it will be recognized as such, and its wonderful powers for good made use of as we are trying now to use the long-neglected powers of architecture, just as soon as we have succeeded in wearing out the rooted prejudice which sees in every vestment the cloak of the devil, in every candle and whiff of incense a snare of—in the words of the “escaped nuns”—the scarlet woman on her seven hills of sin.



This is, then, I think, one of the first necessities of beauty in public worship that demands consideration, the need of beauty of ritual. A noble and imposing service, complete in its reverent and solemn ritual, will, I suspect, do more good, have a deeper spiritual effect than many a sermon; and if we are to see Christianity take the leadership in extricating the world from the slough in which it has lost itself, it will be well for us to recognize the nobility of the emotions, their close connection with religious feeling, and their instant sympathy with all forms of art, particularly the art of ritual.



And now let us come to a possibly more legitimate subject of inquiry—for myself: the question of art in houses of public worship. Why are churches so almost universally bad as they are now? I think it is, first of all, because during the last two hundred years we have mixed up the functions of a church very seriously, and to the extreme injury of our churches, and of the Church as well.

For sixteen hundred years, from the day of the Apostles until that of Luther, a church had three aspects. First, that of a Tabernacle, an earthly abode of God. Second, that of a Sanctuary, a place for the solemnizing of the Church's Sacraments. Third, that of a meeting house. So long as this three-fold function was recognized, so long as a church was built in worship, made glorious with all the treas-

ure that might be lavished by devoted hands, so long as it was in very truth a Gate of Heaven where man and the invisible saints and angels met in the awful presence of God,—just so long did it remain a true church, the spiritual home of a community. And while this age endured, the Church took another aspect, that of a great, silent, irresistible agency for the influencing of the souls of men through the ministry of exalted art. But the moment misguided persons forgot that a church was anything but a meeting house where a hundred different sets of men, each supremely satisfied with its own trivial version of the teachings of the Bible, might gather to feed its self-satisfaction with the agreeable discourses of its chosen mouth-piece, the moment meeting houses, with their bare and forbidding walls and their rented pews, their glorified pulpits and insignificant Communion tables, and their atmosphere of a country parlor, open one day in the week, locked on the others,—the moment these curious structures took the place of real churches, that moment the dark ages of Christian art began; that moment the world which accepted the new religion was absolved from its allegiance to Christianity, and though strenuous efforts were made to browbeat the nations into terrified subservience, though a more rigid union of Church and State was attempted than had ever been before, the effort was in vain, the legal connection snapped, the spiritual tie was dissolved, and henceforth religion was a thing apart, and, as a result, art vanished in large measure from the daily life of the people.

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Now, how shall we be saved from the body of this death, for saved we must be if art holds anything of the position I have claimed for it, and if through noble religious architecture may lie in part the way of our deliverance from materialism and scepticism and the ills we now are heir to? In the first place, I should say, we must begin a great movement which can best be called a movement of the Restoration,—for that I am sure is the name by which the next epoch of the world will be known. We must return to the ancient idea of the functions of a church, and the order of their precedence. We must cease looking on the house of God as a Sunday club, we must give as they gave in the fifteenth century; we must give with the spirit with which they gave, for if we give from motives of ostentation, emulation, self-glorification, our work will be as hideous as it is now, and we ourselves shall be deservedly damned. We must build churches which are, first of all, churches, and not meeting houses. We must realize that art is the servant of God, and that its place is in the church rather than in our art museums. We must make our churches glorious within, with all the pomp and majesty of wonderful art, and if we honestly try to do this, and with an honorable motive, we shall soon have enough good art to do it with. Finally, we must abandon forever our

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modern theories of church planning. We must go back to mediaeval times, back to the day when Luther killed all art but music in Germany, when Calvin killed all righteous art in France, and when Henry VIII killed all art of any kind whatever in England, and take up the work where then it was broken off. We must realize that the first desideratum of a church is not that from every seat therein the occupant may be able to see the pulpit without turning his head, but that so far as man is concerned, it is that he shall be filled with the righteous sense of awe and mystery and devotion.

And if this result may be obtained by massive columns and piers, by dim light, and narrow, shadowy aisles, by cavernous vaults and soaring arches, then these things we must have, even if some people have to sit behind pillars, and even if we can't see every change of facial expression of the preacher.

For by this course we may be enabled at last to combat the destructive influences of contemporary social and political, artistic and religious conditions, to mitigate in a measure their malign effects on life, and so lay the foundations for the restoration of the noble things that we have rejected, win back the old lamps we have foolishly sold for new. We may cover the land with ateliers and studios, add to the intolerable din the clamor of innumerable "teachers of art," and our labor will be wasted. Only through a new vision of the mystery of life and its duties, only through a restored knowledge of the essentials of this world, can beauty and art be brought back to a people which know them not. Their return will be the evidence of the victory of the Restoration, showing that the fight is won, and that the reign of materialism is at an end. With the dawn of this new life, art and religion will stand side by side, invincible in union, the fruit of victory, the guaranty of its endurance.



And now for a close I want to describe to you a meeting house and a church that I know, as they appear inside. One was built in a year,—some ten years ago: one was built in about five centuries. One represents the sort of thing we have arrived at by way of meeting-house-ism: the other what we have lost by the same means. Here is the interior of the meeting house:

In plan it is a Greek cross with shallow arms, a slight recess at one end serving in place of a chancel; the floor slopes like that of a theatre, and the curving lines of theatre chairs are upholstered with imitation red leather; the walls are very low,—you could almost touch the cornice with your hand, but the roof rises with a steep pitch, high in the middle, supported by elaborate, but flimsy and unscientific trusses, lots of them, until the roof is a confusion of unnecessary and trivial timbers. The wood work is of natural oak, like a railway station, very yellow and very cheap: the walls are painted terra-cotta

red at the base, and a muddy olive above, with a border of yellow between, stenciled with absurd geometrical patterns. In each arm of the cross is a window, one round, one a triple window, one round arched, one with a square head, and all are filled with tawdry and virulent glass in absurd designs, for example, a pink angel hanging over two small children, clothed one in yellow and one in peacock blue, who are chasing magenta butterflies,—a memorial to two children, I believe. The kind of furniture one finds in Odd Fellows' lodges is on the platform, and the entire floor is covered with a violent carpet of red and black. Everything is very light, almost dazzling, and at night electric lights in brass sockets blaze everywhere. But how give an idea of the architectural horror of it all? Not one fine line in it, not one artistic proportion, not a bit of a shadow, not a suspicion of composition. The whole thing cut up by hundreds of little columns and arches which one could almost throw down with one's hand. Everywhere an effect of cheap and tawdry ostentatiousness; everywhere the complexity of inane elaboration and panic-stricken incapacity.

I heard public service here once,—for which act I hope to be forgiven. It consisted of several extemporaneous and rather explanatory prayers, an anthem by a quartet of expensive singers, the reading of some psalms, a solo—quite unintelligible—by the soprano, and an address by the minister. He was in evening dress, though it was at half after ten in the morning. The subject of the discourse was, "The Humanitarianism of Browning's Caliban upon Setebos."

Such is the goal to which meeting-house-ism has led us, and it is hardly to be wondered at if my mind wandered back across the sea to a mouldering monument of the time when a church was God's holy temple, not man's Sunday club. Will you come with me while we look on that which we have lost, and which we must labor for the future to regain.

It is May-time and the air is very still. On the heights over the little town where the crowded roofs that surge like dark waves against the rugged cliffs, break into a foam of living verdure, rise the shadowy towers and pinnacles of a church. In the still air the great bells boom sonorously, while from every street and lane the people are gathering to join in public worship of the God that made heaven and earth. With them we climb the cliffs and stand at last before the rugged walls and massive buttresses that rise high into the pale sky, growing richer and more delicate as they ascend, until far above they are fretted into marvelous delicacy of pinnacles and niches and slim gables rich with a wealth of carven foliage, and knotted crockets, and solemn figures of sculptured saints and angels.

In the midst of the shadowy west front the wall opens, and the great doorway is hollowed therein, like a cavern in the living rock. On either side are ranged the figures of saints in marshaled lines,

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prophets, and apostles, martyrs, kings and prelates, a Christian history, rising, rank above rank, in the midst of tangled leafage and delicate canopies, until they bend under the lofty arch and meet in the midst where the Figure of the Lord is enthroned.

From the dark door where hangs a great curtain of leather, wrought with tarnished gold figures and nail-heads of old brass, comes the low sound of distant music, swelling a little as the curtain is drawn aside, fading as it falls again. With the other worshippers we will go within. There is faint, mellow light, mysterious shadow, solemn monotonous chanting, the odor of old incense; and everywhere a silence that the distant singing seems only to intensify. Where we stand there is a vague, palpitating light from the great Catherine window far above our heads, but on either hand is almost impenetrable purple shadow where fluted shafts of hoary stone rise, forever, it would almost seem, until they spread into great branching arches, like the vast limbs of forest trees, where a faint, fluctuant light, stained with dusky hues, breaks through, and so upward until they lose themselves in absolute gloom far overhead.

The stony floor is worn into hollows with the feet of centuries, yet here and there a great slab is left where one can dimly trace the outlines of the figure of a recumbent knight, armored, with hands folded in prayer: here and there a dull burnished space of brass shows a similar form, with Latin texts chiseled in the yellow metal, a chronicle in brass and stone.

Let us pass to one of the aisles where the shadow is thickest. The vaults are lower, and by the dim light of great windows where crowded years have blotted the blazing colors and the vivid figures into a mellow mosaic of translucent jewels, we see how the rigid stone has been wrought into fantastical forms, and how the hollow vaults are covered with great pictures where the color has faded into a strange harmony, and the gold of the aureoles is dusky and dim.

Down the wall of the aisle, beneath the tall windows, are crowded tombs of carved stone and precious marbles,—armed knights and vested Bishops, rigid and still under their crumbling canopies. The wall opens into a golden chapel, where a small Altar rises behind an iron screen flecked with tarnished gilding. Over it is the great shadow of a dim picture in its carved frame, and from the vaulted roof hang lamps of iron and wrought brass, each with its palpitating flame. To one side is a great tomb of ivory-colored marble, where a long-dead Cardinal sleeps, his scarlet hat with its pendant tassels hanging above him.

Beyond the chapel the shadow deepens, and as we approach the choir the music grows louder, and we hear the words of the Mass. From a chapel to the right let us look into the choir. On either side rise long lines of stalls of black oak inlaid with olive wood, each with

its gorgeous canopy of intricate carving. The floor is paved with a maze of precious marbles in tangled patterns, and in the midst rises a vast lectern of carved and gilded oak, where a Priest in a long alb of ancient yellow lace is chanting from a gigantic volume bound in ivory-colored pig-skin, with silver clasps; its vellum pages stiff with precious illuminations in gold and purple and vermillion. Behind him rise many steps, and at the summit is the great Altar, beneath which lie the venerated relics of a Christian martyr. A marvelous fabric of carven stone, crowded with figures of saints, it rises through the lower shadow and the drifting incense, high under the lofty vault of bending stone to where the flush of painted light from storied windows burns on its fretted crest, staining the delicate stone with gules and azure. Tall candlesticks of wrought gold bearing slender candles, gleam against its ancient surface, around it hang lamps of silver and bronze, and in the midst is lifted the Figure of the Crucified, eternal Symbol of the Catholic Faith that wrought this wondrous manifestation of love and adoration.

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The cavernous church has filled with people, who, standing in every part, follow the mighty Sacrifice with reverence and devotion. A chiming bell gives warning of the Canon of the Mass, so unspeakably solemn, so vastly significant, and the multitude falls upon its knees. In the Sanctuary, before the gleaming Altar, the Bishop, surrounded by Priests and acolytes, offers the Oblation for the whole people, pleading for them the Sacrifice of Calvary; the gorgeous vestments heavy with gold and jewels gleaming through the veil of incense, as the splendid and awful ceremonies move solemnly onward, even as they have moved for centuries upon centuries.

A bell rings in the Sanctuary; the music has grown very soft and beautiful; there is no sound from the crowd of worshippers kneeling with bowed heads as the awful Presence of God enters into His holy temple, resting in benediction on all those who worship therein.

"Agnes Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi, Miserere Nobis."



By and by the Mass is finished, the people have departed, each with some consolation, some help for his troubled life. With a very different conception of the nature of the ancient faith we sit silent, awed a little by the overwhelming significance of that which we have seen. The Catholic Faith has become a larger thing to us, worship a very different matter to what we had known before. It is cool now and very still. Lost in wonder and awe we could sit so for hours, while the shadows gather and sleep like smoke in the silent aisles and under the heavy arches. All day like a flowing river the lights and shadows sweep to and fro, gathering now in transept, now in aisle, now in some silent vault, changing ever, moving endlessly. Moving,

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changing as they have moved and changed for almost a thousand years, while generations have lived and passed away. Kingdoms have risen and fallen, nations disappeared from the earth. And all the while the torch of the sacred flame has been given from hand to hand, all the while the holy offices have been repeated daily, pleading the Sacrifice of Calvary for the sake of a world weary with sorrow and sin. So day by day something of precious memory, of sacred association has been added to this church, until it stands, beautiful with the beauty of the Heavenly Jerusalem, sonorous with the voice of living centuries, a treasure house, an universal sermon,—more: a divine revelation, a foreshadowing of the unspeakable glory of the Kingdom of God.



AN OLD CRITICISM ON MILLET'S "THE ANGELUS"

When Millet's famous picture was first exhibited in the Paris Salon forty years ago, the German poet and philosopher LUDWIG PFAU wrote this criticism, which perhaps will be better understood today than in the year 1855.

Two peasants, a man and wife, just at work hoeing potatoes, hear the evening chimes from the village and are saying their prayers. The figures are not joined into one coherent group, but stand opposite each other at a distance of several feet. Straight as an arrow the man's fork sticks in the ground and just as straight he himself stands beside it, his legs half spread. This position is an absolute one, these legs are priceless; they are the legs of the human beast of burden, two supporters, which, bare of all superfluous grace, have only to solve the mechanical problem of the power of gravity; and so, on one of the legs the blue pantaloons describes an uninterrupted straight line from the hip down to the ankle. The risk of this line was the stroke of a genius. The peasant bends his uncovered head a little down towards the hat, which he holds with his folded hands up to the chin. One can see how indifferently and thoughtlessly he, a real "brutum," babbles the religious custom. The wife, in profile, with head bowed down, body forward and her hands folded on her bosom, stands beside her wheelbarrow, on which the potato bag lies, and prays with the expression of ardent devotion. The sun is down and the two figures are but indistinctly set off from the dusky sky, their contours being held in a faint-colored light. The effect of this picture is extraordinary; everything is so correct in tone, so just in its place and stands so plastic in the surrounding locality, that never before a painting has made such an impression of overwhelming reality. Besides there is a powerful harmony and poesy in the coloring. The red gloaming falls on this couple like a curse of ignorance and humiliation and ties them to that sweating ground, which extends clod by clod, as though the labor never should end, up to the far horizon where the little roofs of the village become visible. Like an endless field of toil the earth spreads itself before the burdened human beings. But heaven sends its all-governing light down to them as a promise of a happier future, which shall rise at least for their children and grand-children. A whole social revolution is written on this canvas.